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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 000515

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [AR](#)
SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: ALLIANCES ANNOUNCED, CAMPAIGN SEASON
OFFICIALLY BEGINS FOR JUNE MID-TERMS

REF: A. BUENOS AIRES 360
[B](#). BUENOS AIRES 429
[C](#). BUENOS AIRES 347
[D](#). BUENOS AIRES 470

Classified By: CDA Tom Kelly for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

[1](#). (C) Summary: Argentine political parties have registered their alliances (but not yet their candidate slates) for the June 28 mid-term congressional elections. Although a total of 16 electoral alliances have registered in the country's top two key electoral battlegrounds, Buenos Aires province and the Federal District, four main alliances are competing in the province and three in the Federal District. At the same time, campaign season is officially underway, and once slates are registered -- the deadline is May 9 -- we expect it to kick into high gear. President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (CFK) and former president Nestor Kirchner (NK) have taken to warning that an FpV loss would bring back the chaos that followed Argentina's 2001 financial crisis. The Kirchners' latest effort to scare Argentines into voting their way is directed both at mobilizing their core base, the urban poor, and perhaps warning fence-sitters of the dire consequences that could arise if they lose. Whether this tactic will mobilize more supporters or opponents is uncertain, and the Kirchners' now tenuous congressional majority hangs in the balance. End Summary

[2](#). (SBU) Argentine political parties met an April 28 deadline for registering alliances and coalitions for the June 28 congressional mid-term elections. Since mid-March when the Argentine Congress approved President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner's (CFK) bill to move up the legislative elections from October to March (ref A), opposition parties have kicked into high gear to form alliances in the hopes of presenting a strong, united front capable of beating the Kirchner-allied ruling Victory Front (FpV). Although there are nominally over 40 national political parties and 650 local parties in Argentina, as has been the case in past elections, the principal candidates in the June midterms will be backed by coalitions versus individual parties. The parties' next challenge will be to agree on the composition and order of their candidate slates -- the deadline is May 9. While elections are now less than 60 days away, and the campaign season has officially started, the streets remain relatively devoid of campaign propaganda. "Media campaigns" cannot legally start until May 27. Once candidates are finalized, however, we expect to see campaign posters and graffiti proliferate.

A Playing Field of Alliances in BA Province

[3](#). (SBU) Seven alliances have registered in Buenos Aires province, this race's electoral plum representing 37% of the national vote (ref B). The four major alliances include the ruling FpV but under a newly-christened name, the Victory

Peronist Front (FJpV); the Peronist dissidents' PRO-Union; the Radical Party's (UCR), Civic Coalition's (CC), and Socialist Party's newly-formed Civic and Social Agreement; and Vice President Julio Cobos's Federal Consensus.

14. (SBU) As Peronist Party (PJ) president, NK has yet to officially confirm the FJpV's candidate slate. Nonetheless, it is widely believed that NK will lead that slate with Buenos Aires province Governor Daniel Scioli, and the recent addition of actress Nacha Guevara (who is best known for her stage portrayal of the iconic former first lady Evita Peron). Although Scioli has agreed to run to increase the alliance's electoral chances, he has publicly indicated that he will not occupy his congressional seat if he wins. Rather, he will complete his term as Governor. Guevara and Scioli met with CFK at the Casa Rosada on April 28. Guevara, before leaving for a vacation in Polynesia, said she looks forward to being a national deputy to advance causes of importance to her, such as women's issues.

15. (SBU) The other key electoral forces -- PRO-Union and Civic and Social Agreement -- have confirmed their leading candidates. Pro-Union, the alliance between Peronist dissidents and Buenos Aires Mayor Mauricio Macri of Republican Proposal (PRO), announced in March that national deputies Francisco de Narvaez and Felipe Sola would head their slate. Civic and Social Agreement, the newly-minted alliance between the UCR, the CC, and the Socialists, will be led by CC's Margarita Stolbizer and UCR's Ricardo Alfonsin, the son of recently deceased former President Raul Alfonsin. The alliance's slate will also include some supporters of VP Cobos. Their alliance will be effective in 15 districts.

They will not join forces in Mendoza province, where Radicals will align with supporters of VP Cobos, or in Cordoba, where the CC will include their candidates on the slate led by newly independent Luis Juez, the former Peronist mayor of Cordoba City.

...And in Buenos Aires City

16. (C) Nine alliances have registered in the Federal District, another key electoral district representing 9.5% of the national vote (ref C). The three major alliances include the Republican Proposal (PRO) alliance, the Civic and Social Agreement, and the ruling Victory Front (FpV). In contrast to Buenos Aires province, the FpV has yet to float possible candidates in the Federal District because it is having trouble attracting strong candidates. As reported in ref D, Buenos Aires City Vice-Mayor Gabriela Michetti will head the PRO alliance slate for national deputies. The Civic and Social Agreement slate will be headed by former Central Bank president Alfonso Prat-Gay and constitutional expert Ricardo Gil Lavedra. CC leader Elisa Carrio has publicly agreed to go third on the list, while noting that she would prefer the 7th or 8th place to downplay her personal ambitions.

Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail

17. (C) With the campaign season officially underway, the Kirchners seem to have settled on a campaign theme of fear. Speaking to party supporters at rallies on April 27, 28, and 29, NK asserted that a possible FpV electoral loss in the mid-terms would threaten governability and that the country could fall "into the 2001 pit" and "explode," referring to the social and political chaos that followed the country's massive financial crisis in 2001-02. He added that "if Cristina loses her legislative majority, we will return to poverty. Argentina cannot go back, we have to help Cristina advance our agenda." During an April 29 event with mayors from Cordoba province, CFK echoed her husband, saying that "not only is our agenda at stake" in these elections, "but also the stability and quality of our democracy." She claimed that "the opposition voted against all the laws that have transformed the lives of Argentines."

18. (C) Comment: The Kirchners' rhetoric appears designed to scare fence-sitters into voting their way or at least not voting for the opposition. Some commentators have pointed to the implied threat: vote for the Kirchners to protect you against chaos, or else they will make sure there is chaos. The Kirchners, rather than highlight the progress that Argentina has made in the last six years or present a vision of where they want to take the country, apparently prefer to tap into the traumatized Argentine psyche and exploit a fear of returning to the 2001-02 social and political meltdown.
KELLY